

DR. GERBERDING'S CLOSING COMMENTS:

I'll just echo what Toby said. Wow. What a day and what an incredible amount of listening and learning that's gone on.

Many people have commented on how beautiful this building is and how remarkably changed the campus is. It's a very important lesson, in terms of how we ended up with these buildings.

First of all, we knew we had a scientific mission and a very important mission at this agency. And we recognized that we didn't have the requirements for continuing to accomplish that mission because our scientists were working in disgusting space. We were not able to recruit them, and it would be simply impossible for us to imagine the future of success if we didn't really address this problem.

So we developed some vision about what CDC should look like. It was a very aspirational vision, but we also developed some very specific goals, about a buildings and facilities master plan. We developed an action plan to actually accomplish those goals and then we found some partners. It was really the partners that made it possible for CDC to have the campus evolve, even to the place where it is today. And I must admit to you that we're not done yet. The plan is not complete, and we will continue to try to develop the kind of world-class space that our scientists and our workers deserve.

That process was a very audacious process, and there was a lot of skepticism about it. I think very few people thought the CDC would be able to do this. Very few people really understood how complicated it would be to try to develop a bricks-and-mortar program in the context of some very, very important public health priorities that needed attention. Even today, there are people who are worried that, by putting our emphasis on buildings and facilities, we weren't able to simultaneously develop the same kind of energy and enthusiasm around other priorities that are also important to us.

So there was a balancing that went on and a prioritization and a commitment of a lot of people. But again, it came back to our partners, the people who helped us prioritize, who helped us validate, who helped us be successful in accomplishing our buildings and facilities master plan.

I know this is a long way from health impact and improving the health of our nation. But I think it is a story that helps me have confidence. When you establish goals and you commit to them as an agency and you're willing to put your work and your energy and your effort where your vision and your goals really take you -- and, most importantly, when you engage your partners in a meaningful way -- then you can be far more successful than anyone ever dreamed possible. And that is what we're here to talk about. And, at least for me, that's what this day has been about.

We have learned a lot just in one day's worth of

conversation on a pretty focused set of issues. One thing that has come up in several conversations is that perhaps we need to really be specific about what we mean by partnership and what a partner really is. I've gone to the dictionary a few times to try to figure out if we could find a good enough definition of "partner." And generally, those definitions focus on some kind of traditional statements around a partner or a partnership being two or more entities or organizations working together for the mutual benefit of each. I think that's a pretty simple and straightforward concept of a partnership.

But these days, our appreciation of a partnership has perhaps become a bit more complex. And I really think that what the conversation today has spun back to, time and time again, is the vision of partnership that really is about a complex network evolving. It is a network with many hubs; with a huge amount of diversity in it; with the flexibility to add or subtract or expand and contract, depending on the need or the issue; with the kind of robust connectivity that allows not just two-way communication but integrated communication that is rapid and efficient and simultaneous across the network for all who have a need to have that kind of information. A network where, truly, the whole is greater than the sum of the parts.

Now, I think that is a possibility. We have seen many examples of networks within this room that I think can and do often function in that way. But if we were really able to link up this set of partners and the people that you have

partnerships with, then we would have an extraordinary network. And I believe that we would be far more able to accomplish our goals and to achieve that overarching improvement in health that we all value so highly in our hearts as members of the public health profession.

We have learned a lot today, and I couldn't possibly summarize the richness of the presentations that have been given here. When we have the transcripts from the breakouts, we're going to have very deep and detailed information. And we're going to have to spend some time going through them. But at least for me -- and I am very open to corrections, additions, and subtractions to this - there are some important things I have learned today.

One of them is that partners truly add value and are very eager to do so in the context of our goals. I feel like we have heard a strong commitment to supporting our efforts to achieve goals. And I've heard that people recognize that they can bring a lot of value to the process for us and really, really do want to step up to the plate and do that. There were a lot of ways mentioned where value was obvious. These include the fact that, with a diverse set of partners with the range of skills and expertise, we are so much richer and so much wiser in our ability to establish clear objectives, to prioritize those objectives, to create specific and understandable clarity around roles and responsibilities. And our partners aren't all going to work in that mode with us in the same way because there is a lot

of diversity and a lot of difference in capability, but there certainly is a willingness to go there together in collaboration.

I think we also learned how much capacity our partners have to contribute to this effort. There are far more assets in the partnership network than CDC would ever be able to create or fund or develop independently of our partners. On the healthy homes panel this morning we heard how some organizations have unique and remarkable capabilities that could very easily lend themselves to enhancing or augmenting our ability to accomplish certain pieces of the goal.

Partners also can add value to our proposition and our experiences by being the reality check, by having candid feedback and input as we go forward, and as we make corrections or change our pathways and learn as we go. When it comes to CDC making a mistake or CDC needing to improve in some area, there is nothing more credible than a partner. That's tremendously valuable. We wouldn't have to pay a consultant to do that. We can just get that from our partners, so it's a wonderful gift to us.

I think we've also learned that our partners need a return on their investment. Obviously, no one's going to make a commitment if there isn't some value in return, and we have to be very conscious of that. It's not going to be the same kind of ROI (return on investment) for every kind of partner. So we're going to have situations where sometimes that return on investment is money. But more often, it may be the case that we

help partners meet their priorities a little more successfully or we contribute our expertise or our connections to lend values to the partners' enterprises. Whatever the currency is, we have to appreciate and be more attentive to partners' needs and not just those needs of CDC's agenda.

I think we've learned that partners do support the concept of accountability in very serious ways. We heard a lot of discussion coming from this morning's groups about performance measures; about being able to have intelligent measurement; about being able to measure things in ways that make sense to people and not just organizations or governments; and that we're willing to commit to the concept of goals and measurements because we believe it is an effective way to communicate and to show our mutual value and to demonstrate how well we're accomplishing the things that we need to accomplish.

This afternoon, we've learned a lot about what CDC can do to improve the success of our partnerships. I'm not going to go through the details that were presented here. But, clearly, communication is one of the most important things that we can do to improve our success. Communication is a complicated topic but it must include ease. It must include many channels. It must be culturally sensitive, not just to the constituent public but to the constituent partners. The communication needs to be honest and truthful and credible. It needs to be occurring in synchrony and consistently across all layers of our organization, and it needs to be happening in a time frame where

it adds value to the enterprises in which partners are engaged. There were a lot more elements that were up there, but those were some that seemed the most relevant to me.

There seems to be enthusiastic interest and support for the concept of a partner point of contact. This is something that we have been planning to do and we will need your help with developing that more specifically, particularly for partners that touch many parts of the agency. But we believe that having a person that you can reliably trust and contact -- either as a source of information or as a rapid triage to getting services or the input that you need -- is a no-brainer. We should be able to figure out how to make that work for all of our partners in ways that can build on some of the successful experiences we already have at various parts of the organization.

One very specific suggestion here was to solicit from you on a regular basis how well we are doing with our partnerships. I'm being careful not to make commitments today because I think we need more input before we establish an agenda or a set of actions here. However, this is one possible action step that I'm going to take a special interest in because I think there's no better way to know how we're doing than to get credible feedback. I would invite that feedback on your evaluation forms before you leave or send them back to us later. This is an ongoing opportunity for us to get meaningful information about what are we doing well, what do we still need

to work on, or what new issues can we improve. And that is something that appeals to me and would certainly be a topic for future discussion at CDC and with you.

I hope you also believe me when I say that today CDC has learned -- or perhaps relearned -- that we can listen. We worked really hard to emphasize the importance of listening at this meeting. It's not always easy to listen. And sometimes listening means you have to stay in a space where, even when you disagree with something or you see things a bit differently, you don't jump in with your opinion. Rather, you try to incubate for a little while in the different perspective that people are offering.

I'm really pleased that the listening has brought challenges. I think this was not a monolithic group of people and so we got a lot of diverse input. I'm sure that as we read through the summaries from the breakout sessions, we're going to see a lot more diversity of input. And that's a good thing. If you were all the same and all said the same thing, it would be easier to have a much smaller meeting. But we really wanted to make sure that we could get as much breadth and as much diversity of input as we could.

We are listening, and we are committed to not having this be the end of the story, but rather the beginning of the story. We have a long way to go to move ourselves and our fully developed network of partners to a frame where we are credibly adding value and really moving the needle on the dial of the



health impact that we would like to achieve. The more we listen, the more likely we are able to do that faster.

If you come to my office us now, you will see a small sign hanging on the door between our little conference room and my office. And the sign just has one word on it, and it says, "Listen." So I'm working on that on a personal basis, and I think as leaders we're working on that. I hope that is a mindset and an attribute at CDC that becomes more palpable than it's been in the past in some areas of our organization.

So the next steps in this process are very simple. The first next step is that you will be able to see the details from this meeting on the Web portal in a turnaround time that is as fast as we can accomplish, given that poor Toby's got to take a vacation beginning at about 4:30 today. So we are going to allow him a bit of a reprieve.

But we will also have a chance to review the input from the breakout sessions in detail. And on Monday, the group of people who worked on this meeting are going to sit down in an after-action mode and really sort through this and see if we can compile things into an arrangement that helps organize all of this input into a format where we can check in with you. Did we get it right? This is what we think we heard. These are what we think are the synthesis of the priorities and the perspectives. And we'll get that arrangement back to you so that you can add to it or emphasize things that we've left out or have misunderstood. So that would be the second component of

the next steps.

I think the third component should be more fun. You've brought up a lot of good ideas. You've brought up things that we can correct easily. You've brought up things that will require long-term change and commitment. You've brought up some innovations, and you really have a very rich inventory of things that we might be able to do now or do soon to accelerate the development of our partnerships and improve our communication. And so as we get those things compiled and think through which of them can we do and which of them are we not able to do right now, we'd like to have a chance to get your perspectives and ideas on how we would go about executing them. So we will be coming back to you for input on some of these new ideas and ways that we can convert your advice into action and really see some results.

So that's what I'm able to say about next steps today in terms of the immediate benefits of this wonderful consultation. But I think there are also long-term commitments that everyone knows are important to us. And the biggest one of all is the commitment to doing everything we can to create a highly successful and robust network of partners that builds on the wonderful partnerships that we've had for a long time. This network adds new partnership and finds that wonderful zone of interaction where our partners are in synchrony and working synergistically to help us achieve our goals faster -- those goals that reflect our core values in public health and the

things that we all hold dear to our hearts professionally. But of course, those are things that also matter to us as family members and parents and individual citizens in our country and around the world.

So we can do more if we do it together. And we certainly are committed to doing our part to build on what wonderful gifts you're bringing us. So thank you very much for what I think is a wonderful day at CDC, and let's go for the gold.

(Applause)

